

# **11 People Died from Suspected Overdoses During Long Holiday Weekend; DSAMH Community Engagement Sessions Begin This Week**

NEW CASTLE (Nov. 27, 2017) – Since Wednesday, 11 people have died in Delaware from suspected overdoses, raising the concern over the impact of the holidays on people who are in active use and prompting the Secretary of Health and Social Services to make an urgent plea for families to seek out a connection to treatment on behalf of their loved ones.

“We know that people who are suffering from addiction are vulnerable, and those vulnerabilities often become heightened during the holidays,” said DHSS Secretary Dr. Kara Odom Walker, a board-certified family physician. “The holidays can be stressful and may be a trigger point for people struggling with substance use disorder. The most important thing that families can do is to help their loved ones find a connection to treatment and to get them to that initial intake.”

Of the 11 people who died from suspected overdoses, eight were in New Castle County, and three were in Kent and Sussex counties. The deaths involved both genders, ranging in age from 23 to 62. Through Nov. 26, the total number of deaths from suspected overdoses stands at 215.

Beginning this week, families will have an opportunity to connect with dozens of community partners as they participate in a series of free addiction-related community sessions hosted by the Delaware Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health (DSAMH). The community sessions are an easy way for

people to talk with treatment experts, learn about local services and supports, and have access to a training class on how to use the overdose-reversing medication naloxone. A Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health trainer will lead the naloxone training sessions at each event.

All community sessions are from 2-7 p.m. The schedule:

- Kent County: Thursday, Nov. 30, Delaware Technical Community College, Terry Campus, Corporate Training Center, 100 Campus Drive, Dover.
- New Castle County: Wednesday, Dec. 6, West End Neighborhood House, 710 N. Lincoln St., Wilmington.
- Sussex County: Thursday, Dec. 14, Delaware Technical Community College, Owens Campus, Carter Partnership Center, 21179 College Drive, Georgetown.

Beyond the community sessions, Secretary Walker encouraged individuals in active substance use to see a medical provider immediately or call DHSS' 24/7 Crisis Services Hotline to be connected to trained crisis professionals who can discuss treatment options. In Kent and Sussex counties, the number is 1-800-345-6785. In New Castle County, the number is 1-800-652-2929. Individuals and families also can visit DHSS' website, [www.HelpIsHereDE.com](http://www.HelpIsHereDE.com), for addiction treatment and recovery services in Delaware and nearby states.

In 2016, 308 people died in Delaware from overdoses, up 35 percent from the 228 people who died in 2015.

For more information about the community engagement sessions, contact the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Training Office at 302-255-9480 or email [dsamh.training@delaware.gov](mailto:dsamh.training@delaware.gov)

-30-

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and protecting vulnerable populations.